

# Participation and Success Rates for Women and Minorities in IPDA Debate

Bob Alexander, Bossier Parish Community College  
Joe Ganakos, Lee College  
Trey Gibson, Louisiana State University - Shreveport

## Abstract

*Historical data has indicated inequality in both participation rates as well as competitive success of women and minorities in intercollegiate debate. This study seeks to take a snapshot of the current demographic makeup of IPDA debate in comparison to the current demographic makeup of collegiate enrollments. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine whether women and minority competitors have experienced equality in competitive success when compared with male and majority competitors. Evaluation of the data indicates that the organization has made strides over historical inequalities, yet proportional representation inline with collegiate enrollment figures has not yet been achieved. Furthermore, the data indicates that competitive success correlates more strongly with experience than race and/or gender, and thus the authors postulate that the community must move toward both recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented demographics.*

## Review of Literature

For more than 35 years, forensics organizations have sought methods to create greater gender and ethnic equality (Murphy; Manchester & Friedley; Millsap & Millsap). Beyond simple participation rates, organizations have also focused upon competitive success as well as retention rates. Rogers (et al) noted that "...the percentages for women decrease markedly and minority participation becomes almost negligible when the competitors are eligible for promotion to the Open division. Women and minority participation drops between 50 and 75 percent after their first year of competition" (page 3).

An initial review of the literature illustrates that disparities are present at varying degrees through each major intercollegiate debate organization. Recent data for NFA-LD shows a trend toward greater equality, though disparity still exists. Rogers (et al) showed a decreased percentage of white-male involvement in LD debate (with white males making up 71%, 68% and 64% of the field in the novice division and 78%, 77%, and 68% of the field in the open division for the years 1990, 1995 and 2000, respectively), though these numbers continue to show a disparity from the general collegiate population. Millsap and Millsap's study of the 2000 and 2005 NFA-LD Championship Tournament's also showed a trend toward greater gender equality with 28% female participation in 2000 increasing to 42% female participation in 2005.

Furthermore Millsap and Millsap noted that female competitors won 29% of their preliminary rounds in 2000 increasing to 45% of preliminary rounds in 2005.

NPDA, according to Rogers (et al) also demonstrated above average participation percentages of white males, with a slightly greater disparity in the open division (with white males making up 51%, 49% and 55% of the field for the novice division and 57%, 63% and 61% of the field for the 1990, 1995 and 2000 seasons respectively).

CEDA demonstrated an even greater disparity. Evaluating the CEDA national tournament, Stepp and Gardner found that the percentage of male participants had dropped from 71% in 1990 to 64% in 2000. Stepp and Gardner summed up the results by noting that this "...is still not representative of the collegiate body in which women comprise 55.8% of students" (p.74). Furthermore, Rogers (et al) noted that during regular season competitions, the novice division is closer to representation of college enrollment (with 42%, 44% and 51% of the field being white male participants for the years 1990, 1995 and 2000 respectively). However, two disturbing trends are apparent in Rogers' (et al) data: 1) over the years 1990 to 2000 CEDA grew more homogenous (counter to the trend of other forensics organizations) and 2) there is a large disparity when looking to the open division (68%, 71% and 80% of the field being white male participants for the years 1990, 1995 and 2000 respectively).

NDT has demonstrated a positive trend toward equality; however the national tournament continues to have the greatest levels of inequality. Manchester and Friedley evaluated progress from the 1984 and 2001 national tournaments and found that while participation of female competitors marginally increased (female participation was 15% of the field in 1984 and 25% of the field in 2001), success for female competitors in elimination rounds actually decreased over the same timeframe. Furthermore, success rates in preliminary rounds also showed great disparity in the 2001 national tournament, as male competitors won 62% of their preliminary rounds, compared to female competitors who only won 35% of their preliminary rounds (Millsap and Millsap). Manchester and Friedley commented that "...these findings do provide powerful commentary on male/female parity within the primary outlet for policy debate – it simply does not exist" (p.32).

For IPDA, there is much less data available. Evaluating the 1998, 1999 and 2000 seasons, Rogers (et al) found that regular season participation for white male competitors remained slightly above 50% in the novice division (with annual participation rates of 55%, 49%, and 53% respectively) and also showed greater disparity with the participation of white male competitors in advanced divisions (with annual participation rates of 61%, 63% and 68% respectively).

This study seeks to shine more light upon the current status of racial and gender equality in IPDA debate. To that extent, the paper will test the following hypotheses in an attempt to determine if race and/or gender are predictors of competitive success, as well as evaluating participatory rates in the national tournament:



2007 National Tournament	46.2%	34.9%	15.4%	33.6%	28.8%	18.6%	10.3%	20.1%
2008 National Tournament	35.4%	47.2%	13.0%	34.7%	24.6%	27.8%	34.8%	27.4%
Totals 2007 + 2008 National Tournaments	40.2%	40.5%	14.5%	34.1%	26.5%	22.8%	19.4%	23.6%
National College Enrollment (US Census Bureau 2008)				56.9%				22.9%

H1a: That minority participation rates in the national tournament reflect a similar proportion of national college enrollment.

Hypothesis 1a is supported, with an overall minority representation within .7% of national enrollment averages. Data culled from census bureau statistics of average annual enrollment compared with this survey data indicate a relatively equal level of representation among racial demographic when simply comparing “minority” and “white, non-Hispanic” demographic participation (with 22.9% of enrolled college students representing a “minority” demographic and 23.6% of IPDA National Tournament entries representing a “minority” demographic). Additionally, evaluation of the two year cycle appears to indicate a progression toward greater representation of minority students in the organization. Not only did the minority participation rate grow from 20.1% in 2007 to 27.4% in 2008, but representation by competition division also became more representative of the general population (whereas 2007 showed a significant underrepresentation in varsity and open divisions, 2008 showed greater balance among the novice and varsity divisions, with the open division having the largest percentage of minority participants).

H1b: That female participation rates in the national tournament reflect a similar proportion of national college enrollment.

Hypothesis 1b is not supported, as disparity is present among gender representation not only in total participation, but at each level of competition. An initial observation is that women are most underrepresented in the Open division, with 15.4% and 13.0% total participation rates in the 2007 and 2008 national tournaments. This continues to illustrate the aforementioned problem noted by Rogers of participation levels dropping off in advanced levels of competition. This issue illustrates that the concern for the organization should be two-fold: recruitment of more women competitors as well as the retention of women competitors.

## Hypothesis 2

Table 2: Participation Rates in Elimination Rounds compared with Preliminary Rounds at the IPDA National Championship Tournament

	Female				Minority			
	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament - Prelim.	46.2%	34.9%	15.4%	33.6%	28.8%	18.6%	10.3%	20.1%

2007 National Tournament - Elim.	37.5%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	31.3%	12.5%	18.8%	20.8%
2008 National Tournament - Prelim.	35.4%	47.2%	13.0%	34.7%	24.6%	27.8%	34.8%	27.4%
2008 National Tournament - Elim.	34.4%	31.3%	12.5%	30.4%	15.6%	12.5%	25.0%	16.1%
Totals 2007 + 2008 National Tournaments - Prelim.	40.2%	40.5%	14.5%	34.1%	26.5%	22.8%	19.4%	23.6%
Totals 2007 + 2008 National Tournaments - Elim.	35.4%	21.9%	20.8%	27.9%	20.8%	12.5%	20.8%	18.3%

H2a: That minority participation rates in elimination rounds reflect a similar proportion of minority entry in the national tournament.

Hypothesis 2a is not supported. Comparing tournament entry percentages to those who qualified for the initial elimination round illustrates a disparity of representation (overall for 2007+2008, 23.6% of the tournament entry represented the “minority” demographic, yet only 18.3% of participation in the initial elimination round represented the “minority” demographic). Furthermore, all but two of the six divisions showed lesser participation rates in elimination rounds than in preliminary rounds (in 2007 the Novice and Open divisions had a greater proportion of minority competitors than were entered in the preliminary rounds).

H2b: That female participation rates in elimination rounds reflect a similar proportion of female entry in the national tournament.

Hypothesis 2b is not supported. Comparing tournament entry percentages to those who qualified for the initial elimination round illustrates a disparity of representation (overall for 2007+2008, 34.1% of the tournament entry represented the “female” demographic, yet only 27.9% of participation in the initial elimination round represented the “female” demographic). Furthermore, all but one of the six divisions showed lesser participation rates in elimination rounds than in preliminary rounds (the 2007 Open division had a greater proportion of female competitors than were entered in the preliminary rounds).

### Hypothesis 3

Table 3: Average Speaker Points at the IPDA National Championship Tournament

	Male				Female			
	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament Average Speaker Points	255.2	275.3	274.4	268.6	255.3	259.0	273.2	258.9
2008 National Tournament Average Speaker Points	245.6	277.6	260.5	256.8	247.0	264.7	269.7	255.6
2007 + 2008 Total Average Speaker Points	249.4	276.2	269.2	263.0	251.2	262.0	272.0	257.3

	White				Minority			
	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament Average Speaker Points	253.4	271.8	274.1	266.2	259.7	260.2	275.9	262.3
2008 National Tournament Average Speaker Points	247.5	273.9	276.6	260.0	241.9	265.2	267.4	254.8
2007 + 2008 Total Average Speaker Points	250.0	272.7	274.8	263.3	250.5	263.0	270.2	258.1

H3a: That average speaker points are relatively constant among each racial demographic at the national tournament.

H3b: That average speaker points are relatively constant among each gender at the national tournament.

Neither hypothesis is supported, as both minorities and women received lower speaker points than white, non-Hispanic and men competitors, respectively. Comparing male to female speaker point averages, the data shows nearly 1 speaker point per round disparity (an average of 5.7 points less for females, per 8 round tournament). The data for women showed the greatest parity in the novice division (where women actually scored an average of 1.8 speaker points / 8 round tournament greater than men) and a slight advantage in the open division (where women scored an average of 2.8 points / 8 round tournament greater than men); however, in the varsity division the disparity was the greatest and female competitors were rated far lower than male competitors (14.2 points / 8 round tournament). When evaluating race as the control variable, the data shows an average of 5.2 points less per 8 round tournament assigned to minority competitors compared to white, non-Hispanic competitors. This disparity again illustrates the novice vs. advanced divisions discrepancy, as the novice division showed the greatest parity (with minority competitors receiving .5 points per 8 round tournament more than white competitors) and advanced divisions showing greater disparity (9.7 points less in varsity and 4.6 points less in open for minority competitors).

### Hypothesis 4

Table 4: Average Number of Wins at the National Championship Tournament

	Preliminary Rounds							
	Male				Female			
	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament Average Wins	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.9
2008 National Tournament Average Wins	4.1	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.1	3.7	4.0	3.9
2007 + 2008 Total Average Wins	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.9

	White				Minority			
	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament Average Wins	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.1	3.5	4.3	3.9
2008 National Tournament Average Wins	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.3	3.8	3.2	3.6	3.6
2007 + 2008 Total Average Wins	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	3.9	3.3	3.8	3.7

		Elimination Rounds*							
		Male				Female			
		Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament	Average Wins	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.5	1.0	0.8
2008 National Tournament	Average Wins	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.6	3.0	1.1
2007 + 2008 Total Average Wins		0.9	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.6	1.7	0.9

		White				Minority			
		Novice	Varsity	Open	Total	Novice	Varsity	Open	Total
2007 National Tournament	Average Wins	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.8
2008 National Tournament	Average Wins	1.0	0.3	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.7
2007 + 2008 Total Average Wins		1.0	0.6	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.4	0.7

\* For elimination rounds, the number of wins indicates the average number of wins in the elimination rounds for a competitor advancing to elimination rounds.

H4a: That competitive success both in preliminary rounds and elimination rounds at the national tournament is relatively constant among each racial demographic.

H4b: That competitive success both in preliminary rounds and elimination rounds at the national tournament is relatively constant among each gender.

Neither hypothesis is supported. For preliminary rounds, both Female and Minority win ratio's demonstrated a minor disparity, with female competitors averaging 93% of the wins of their counterparts, and minority competitors averaging 88% of the wins of their counterparts. However, as noted with speaker points, the varsity division showed the greatest deviation from equal for female competitors, with varsity female competitors only averaging 84% of the wins of their counterparts. The varsity division also showed the greatest deviation from equal for minority competitors, who averaged only 77% of the wins of their counterparts. Furthermore, the average number of wins in preliminary rounds for minorities fell in all three divisions from 2007 to 2008, resulting in an average .3 fewer wins overall; if 2008 is indicative of a trend, this illustrates a departure from relative equality in preliminary round performance of 2007 (95%). For female competitors advancing to elimination rounds, the overall record of success reflects parity; however, significant disparities are present (with female competitors earning a slightly higher average number of wins in the novice division and a significantly higher average number of wins in the open division, yet only averaging 55% of the win totals of their counterparts in the varsity division). For minority competitors, the overall disparity became greater (dropping to an average of 78% of the win totals of their counterparts) and the open division showed the greatest disparity (with minority competitors averaging only 36% of the wins of their counterparts).

### Hypothesis 5

Table 5: 2005-2007 Regular Season, Average Points per Tournament

Division	Male Competitors	Female Competitors	White Competitors	Minority Competitors
Novice	4.9	4.0	4.8	3.6

<b>Varsity</b>	4.8	3.8	4.4	4.4
<b>Open</b>	4.7	3.0	4.4	3.9
<b>Total</b>	4.8	3.8	4.6	3.9

H5a: That competitive success in the regular season is relatively constant among each racial demographic.

H5b: That competitive success in the regular season is relatively constant among each gender.

As with success at the national tournament, the regular season results indicate a disparity when comparing points per tournament (using the IPDA season long points formula for each tournament) when comparing competitor gender as well as when comparing competitor race. When evaluating male and female competitors, the competitive success gap grows when moving from the novice division toward more advanced divisions (.9 points per tournament for novice competitors, compared to 1.0 points and 1.7 points for varsity and open competitors). Race did not show as great of a disparity as gender; however, the results did indicate that minority competitors averaged only 85% of the points earned by their white counterparts (as opposed to 79% for female competitors compared to male competitors).

## Hypothesis 6

Table 6: 2007 & 2008 National Tournaments – Average Number of Preliminary Round Wins and Speaker Points; Novice Division, Sorted by Number of Tournaments Experience

	Average Number of Wins				Average Speaker Points			
	Female	Male	Minority	White	Female	Male	Minority	White
<b>0-25 Percentile Experience</b>	3.1	3.4	3.4	3.2	238.5	239.8	233.5	241.9
<b>26-50 Percentile Experience</b>	3.4	4.5	4.1	4.1	242.2	245.4	245.3	243.8
<b>51-75 Percentile Experience</b>	4.4	3.6	4.0	4.1	257.2	252.9	265.8	250.4
<b>76-100 Percentile Experience</b>	5.1	4.9	4.2	5.1	265.0	261.0	262.7	262.4

H6a: That experience is a greater predictor of competitive success than race or gender at the national tournament.

H6b: That experience is a greater predictor of higher speaker points than race or gender at the national tournament.

For this data subset, only the novice division was analyzed because of difficulty verifying the number of tournaments that competitors from other divisions had previously entered (because of the potential of having competed in other formats of debate). Because the novice division is limited to competitors with less than 8 total tournaments of experience, and the verifiable number of tournaments that each competitor had entered in IPDA, the researchers were satisfied that the percentile analysis would be more accurate by just analyzing the novice division. The data illustrates a strong correlation between



experience and both the number of wins as well as the number of speaker points earned among each of the analyzed demographics. Contrasting female and male competitors, there are disparities in the win totals and speaker points, but those disparities flip from males having higher totals of each for both the 0-25 and 26-50 percentile range to females having higher totals in the 51-75 and 76-100 percentile range. However, consistent among both demographics (with the sole exception of win totals for males in the 51-75 range) is the progressive nature of both wins and speaker points as one becomes more experienced. Similarly, when comparing minority competitors with white competitors, the win totals are virtually identical for both the 26-50 and 51-75 percentiles, with minority competitors in the 0-25 range winning more frequently, and white competitors in the 76-100 range winning more frequently; likewise, in speaker points, minority competitors had higher averages in the 26-50 and 51-75 ranges, and white competitors had higher averages in the 0-25 range with the 76-100 range being identical. Similar to the gender analysis, evaluation of the racial demographics illustrate a relatively consistent increase of both wins and speaker points among competitors as their experience level increases (with the sole exception of the minor decrease in win totals among the 51-75 percentile and speaker points among the 76-100 percentile for minority competitors). For these reasons, experience correlates much stronger with both wins and speaker points than race and/or gender and thus the hypotheses are supported.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

While this format of debate is closer to representative of general collegiate enrollment, it still falls short of an effective representation of a diverse collegiate population, and the lack of diversity is exacerbated as one moves into the more advanced divisions. The data also illustrates that there is a very real disparity among competitive success rates of female and minority competitors; however, that disparity is not necessarily the result of an inherent bias within the format, but perhaps an issue of experience rates. Additional analysis of the data set indicated that the average male competitor in 2007-2008 competed in 5.7 tournaments, whereas the average female competitor competed in only 4.2; similarly, the average white competitor competed in 5.3 tournaments whereas the average minority competitor competed in 4.3. Thus, not only is there an underrepresentation of minorities and women, but they are also competing in fewer tournaments (which contributes to less competitive success). Accordingly, the charge for coaches, competitors and the organizational governance is to not only seek a more aggressive recruitment strategy, but also a more aggressive retention strategy. Additionally, the community needs to re-engage in the conversation about what different students want from the activity, what they like & dislike and what institutional factors may attract students to the activity or deter others from competing or continuing to compete. This format and organization has made progress from the historical disparities of intercollegiate debate as a whole, but continued evaluation is necessary to ensure future progress.

Furthermore, there is significant potential for future research. To more accurately evaluate the status of the organization's makeup, one can take a detailed survey of competitors at the start of a national tournament and chart their competitive success.

Additionally, more effective representation data can be gathered by comparing participant demographics with the demographics of the institutions they represent. Furthermore, the regular season data in this study utilized the IPDA points formula, combining preliminary round wins with points for advancing to elimination rounds and elimination round wins. A more exhaustive analysis would look to performance during individual tournaments separating preliminary rounds and elimination rounds and also evaluating speaker points during regular season competitions. Additionally, in an attempt to confirm the extrapolation from the tests of hypothesis 6, one could test the correlation between competitive success versus experience during regular season competitions as well. Finally, future analysis combining the test variables from this study (i.e. “white, non-Hispanic women,” “minority male,” etc.) could further help to clarify potential disparities as well as target demographics for future recruitment / retention efforts.

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